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LETTER DATED 17 JANUARY 1991 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE UNION OF SOVIET SOCIALIST REPUBLICS TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the statement made on national television, on 17 January 1991, by M. S. Gorbachev, President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, on the situation in the Persian Gulf.

I should appreciate it if you would have the text of this letter circulated as an official document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Y. VORONTSOV

Annex

Statement by the President of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

War has begun tonight in the Persian Gulf. The United States armed forces, in liaison with British, Saudi and other units, have struck at military targets and certain industrial targets in Iraq, and at positions of the Iraqi armed forces.

Events have taken this tragic turn as a result of the refusal of the Iraqi Government to respond to the demands of the world community and withdraw its troops from Kuwait.

From the start of the Iraqi aggression, the Soviet Union has done everything in its power to bring about a peaceful solution to this critical international conflict. Until the very last moment, we were working actively in the hope of averting war and restoring the independence of Kuwait by political means. When, one hour before the start of the military operations, I was informed by the United States Secretary of State, Mr. Baker, of the decision taken, I immediately proposed to President Bush that he take further action by contacting Saddam Hussein directly in order to secure a commitment from him that he would order the immediate withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. At the same time, I instructed our ambassador to Baghdad to contact the Iraqi President and communicate to him the proposal I had made to George Bush. I emphasized the fact that it was necessary, in the interest of the Iraqi people itself and in order to preserve peace in the region, for the President of Iraq to state that he was ready to see to the evacuation of Kuwait. That would have made it possible to delay the onset of war and spare Iraq heavy losses and destruction. I expressed the hope that Saddam Hussein, guided by the higher interests of his people and of the world community, would take that path, the only way out.

This very evening, we have appealed to the Governments of a number of influential countries, among them France, China, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy and India, and to the leaders of most of the Arab countries, to undertake joint and concomitant steps to limit the conflict and prevent it from taking on dangerous proportions.

Aware of the serious consequences that a war waged with immense military forces and the most modern technical capabilities can have for the Arab peoples and the people of the United States and for the state of the world, we express deep regret that it has not been possible to avoid a military conflict. I emphasize once again, however, that we have done everything conceivable to resolve the conflict by non-military means. I wish to state that none of the Soviet citizens currently in Iraq have as yet been victims of the conflict.

The Soviet people can rest assured that the Government will take all the necessary steps to bring the war to an end and re-establish peace as soon as possible, in co-operation with other countries and with the United Nations.

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